

# Lamplighter

22 Tevet  
Shemot  
**912**  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Shemot, we read the incident where Moses came upon two Jews (Datan and Aviram) in the midst of an argument. When one man lifted his hand to strike the other, Moses cried out, "Rasha! (Evil one!) Why do you strike your fellow?" Moses called him a rasha even though he had not yet delivered the blow, as the very act of raising one's hand against another person is forbidden.

Any individual who lifts his hand against another is termed a rasha, even if he does not actually hit him. But why is it prohibited to raise one's hand? Why is it considered such a serious transgression?

To explain:

Man was created for the sole purpose of serving his Maker, to learn Torah and perform mitzvot in accordance with G-d's will.

The human body is comprised of many different limbs, each one of which must be properly utilized in the service of G-d. Some mitzvot are performed with the feet, others through the power of speech, and others even with the nose. Each and every limb has a specific purpose, designed to carry out its own particular commandments.

So too, the human hand has been created to perform G-d's mitzvot. There are many commandments that are done with the hands: donning tefillin, building a suka, lighting Shabbat candles, etc.

The hand is especially suited to perform the mitzva of tzedaka (charity). With our hands we take a coin and give it to a poor person or place it in a tzedaka box, as the Torah enjoins us: "You shall surely open up your hand."

The primary function of the hand is to do good for others. When a person argues with his fellow man and lifts his hand as if to strike him, he is using that hand to bring him harm — the opposite of the purpose for which it was created.

For this reason Moses called the man a rasha, for it is evil to use the hand which G-d has created for good in a negative fashion. Indeed, it is a serious transgression to pervert the potential for good into a potential for evil. Moses therefore became angry even before a blow could be delivered.

A person who hits his fellow and causes him pain commits a sin "between man and his fellow man."

A person who lifts his hand in anger, even though he does not strike the other person, commits a sin "between man and G-d" by distorting the very purpose for which the hand was created.

Let us therefore use our hands — and all our limbs — to carry out G-d's will and serve Him; for that is the true purpose for which man was created.

*(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

## Are We Melting?

By Dovid Zaklikowski

Is there a future?

As the doomsday predictions of accumulating greenhouse gases, melting arctic ice, vanishing polar bears and rising sea levels, coupled with predictions of a world soon to be a barren desert, submerged under the ocean, or both, begin to filter into our consciousness, will a cloud of despair begin to fog our actions? Will our faith in the surety of life begin to waver? Will the determination and resolve that's needed to tackle life's challenges begin to slacken?

Egypt, 1394 BCE. Pharaoh decrees that all Jewish newborn males be thrown in to the Nile. That would effectively make the Hebrews an extinct tribe, a relic of history. Without any future, there was seemingly no purpose in life, and certainly no point in procreation. This was the logical line of reasoning embraced by Amram and his wife Jochebed, who decided to divorce. There was no point in staying married.

Miriam, their young daughter, admonished them not to give up. "There is a master plan to which we are not privy," she insisted. "There is no reason to despair when only G-d knows what the future holds; what our destiny has in store for us."

They saw the wisdom of her words and remarried; their hearts full of trust in G-d. Their courageous act was rewarded. Moses was born. There was a future; and what a bright future it was.

Auschwitz. 1945. My grandfather, Reb Henoch as he was known before the war, is standing in line to the infamous Auschwitz gas chambers. His usual smile had faded away over the months he had spent in Auschwitz, replaced now by a frown and depressed look. He knew exactly where the line was headed, there were no secrets. The world was ending right here, right now. There was no turning back. There was no future — not for him, and not for his people.

It was Friday night; the holy Shabbat that has watched over the Jewish nation since their redemption from Egypt. Henoch fumbled for something in his pocket, he found it; it was the scraps of hard bread that he had collected the entire week. He had rationed his meager portion of daily bread so that at the end of the week he could sanctify the Shabbat by reciting the *kiddush* over a few crusts of bread.

He was determined to do this one mitzvah, even if it would be his last. To the utter amazement of those near him on the line, and despite their feeble protests, he proceeded to recite the *kiddush* as if he was standing at his Shabbat table. He ate a crumb and shared the rest with the other Jews around him.

On that night the heavens opened up to hear my grandfather's *kiddush*. And at that exact moment, the mechanism which operated the chamber of death malfunctioned. Thirty years later he was still around to tell the story of his fateful Shabbat at Auschwitz.

His Shabbat lives on in my young son, as he stands beside me when I sanctify the Day of Rest over a cup of wine at my Shabbat table in Brooklyn. Henoch did not give up and there was a future.

Such is the way of the Jew; to never give up. There is always a future, and a good one at that. Giving up on the future is a failure in and of itself.

The academia will continue to debate whether our fate is in the hands of the changing climate. We, on our part, will continue to do what we need to do, intent on making this world a better place, with less pollution, less violence and darkness.

One thing, however, we will never doubt. There is a future.



## Destruction or Construction?

By Miriam Szokovski

As anyone with experience will tell you, having construction done is never easy. The workers arrive, ready to set up shop in your private house for some specified amount of time, which is usually just a euphemism for "indefinitely." Often the family ends up being restricted to a small area of the house that remains relatively intact, while the rest of the rooms are being remodeled, repaired, redecorated and sometimes refurnished.

Recently, my landlord decided to step foot into the world of home improvements and spiffy up the old brick house, concentrating primarily on the bathrooms. Never having lived "under construction" before, I naively believed the builder's claims that the job would be completed in under a fortnight. Two weeks is not so long after all; a mere fourteen days of chaos sounded doable. Two months later, they were still going strong.

On the first morning, the workers moved in; literally. They brought their radio, electric kettle, newspapers and food, adjusted the heating and cooling to suit themselves and, all in all, made themselves right at home.

Sure, they also brought tools with them. Hammers, saws and all sorts of unrecognizable machinery accompanied their invasion. Anything, it seemed, that would make as much noise as possible. And so, between their meal breaks and bathroom breaks, cigarette breaks and phone breaks, they began to work on re-doing the bathrooms.

First, they removed all the "furniture": the bathtub was taken out, leaving a large unfinished piece of floor, and the faucets dangling uselessly from the tiled wall. Next to go was the sink and its connecting pipes, making the medicine cabinet look strangely out of place in the middle of the bare wall. Following that, the toilet was removed, along with the shower cubicle and its sliding doors.

Over the next few days the tiles were ripped off the walls and floor, the medicine cabinet dismantled, towel racks unscrewed and the light fixture removed. Now a lone bulb hanging by a dirty wire illuminated the bare room.

Two weeks were almost up, and I was beginning to doubt that the renovations would be completed in the promised time. My suspicions were confirmed when the builders failed to show up the next day, and the next. Five days later they reappeared, claiming a long weekend for some unknown public holiday.

After their self-appointed vacation, things moved slowly. The workers would show up, spend all day in the house and leave late afternoon or early evening. As they shut the door behind them, I would go to check on the progress... but day after day, nothing seemed to change. Things moved around, boxes appeared, other boxes disappeared, but the room remained empty and completely unusable.

It was at this point that I began to feel a little puzzled. The workmen were supposed to be improving the bathroom. They were hired to construct, to improve, but all that seemed to be happening was destruction and demolition. How could this be a part of the construction of a new, beautiful, modernised bathroom?

In fact, the bathroom had looked a lot nicer before the workmen ever stepped foot in the house. How could this "destruction" be productive? Would it not be better to fix and improve what was already there, without completely demolishing it? At least, beforehand, the room had been functional; now it was neither useful and certainly not pretty.

There is a concept in Chassidic teachings known as "*yerida l'zorech aliya*," "a descent for the purpose of an ascent." This idea, can be applied in many different ways.

Take, for example, jumping. Stand up and try doing five jumping jacks. It is extremely difficult to raise your body from the ground without first bending your knees. Also, the higher you wish to jump, the more you must first bend your knees. In order to jump, to rise, to ascend, it is necessary to first have a descent.

Furthermore, one may infer that based on the depth of the descent, is the ascent. The lower the descent, the higher the resulting ascent will necessarily be. Therefore, the complete destruction of my bathroom was necessary for the end result to be truly pleasing.

This principle applies to the soul's descent into the world. The soul is most at home in the higher worlds near G-d. However, the soul agrees to descend into this lower world, to be involved with material pursuits, in order to ultimately rise to a higher place than it originally came from. By coming to this world, and amassing *mitzvot* (good deeds), the *neshama* (the soul) earns itself a higher place in the next world.

This analogy even proves true psychologically. How often do we find ourselves more challenged in one area than another? We may spend years, even decades, trying to overcome this challenge, yet it is precisely this set of obstacles which moulds us into who we are.

Often it is the descents in our life, the difficulties and the obstacles that we are confronted with, that force us to grow and change. By confronting our challenges, working with them and through them, we enable ourselves to break out of our limitations and reach a better, happier and healthier place. A place we would not have reached if not for that original descent.

This idea has been played out many times in Jewish history. The Jewish people needed to go down to Egypt and be enslaved there for 210 years in order to ultimately merit the Exodus and the giving of the Torah. Following that, the Israelites experienced another descent - they were forced to wander in the desert for forty years in order to gain entry to the Land of Israel.

With the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish people entered the period of descent in which we find ourselves today. This period of exile, while painful and disheartening, is a necessary step towards the end of all exiles. This longest, harshest and final period of descent in the entire history of the Jewish people is only a means to the highest ascent that we will experience with the coming of the final redemption.

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As I continued to follow the construction of my bathroom day after day, it was often difficult, even impossible, to discern any progress. Nevertheless, the day came when I entered the room to discover a complete transformation. The floor and lower walls had been covered with tiles matching the calming pale blue paint of the ceiling and upper walls. A brand new, shiny sink, bathtub, shower and toilet gave the entire room a luxurious and inviting tone. It didn't happen overnight. It took plenty of hard work and a lot of patience. But the result was certainly worthwhile.

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ISSUE 912

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

One must always think to himself: what have I done and what am I doing now to alleviate the birth-pangs of Moshiach, and to merit the complete Redemption which will come through our righteous Moshiach? (*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Previous Rebbe*)

# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



## A FOOLS' PARADISE

24 Tevet, 5722 (1962)

The annual event, taking place in such close proximity to Yud Shevat, the yahrtzeit of my father-in-law, of saintly memory, will, I trust, bear the imprint of his influence and inspiration.

In the course of his allotted life span on this earth, my father-in-law saw and contended with many different worlds. But whether it was under Czarist Russia or under Soviet Russia, during the two World Wars or during their aftermaths, in the Old World or in the New — he was always the indefatigable leader of the Jewish people, dedicated heart and soul to the spiritual and material well-being of our people.

Exemplifying a pattern of leadership which is the heritage of his illustrious ancestor, the Old Rebbe, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch (on whose yahrtzeit this letter is written), my father-in-law was as vitally concerned with the child learning alef-beit as with the advanced yeshiva student. His love for his disciples and followers to whom he expounded the inner secrets of the Torah, was only matched by his love for his fellow Jew in a distant country, deprived of the most elementary educational facilities.

Jewish education was his primary concern, and the same spirit of dedication permeated his emissaries who pioneered in many an educational field under his inspiring initiative and guidance. This work truly expressed the unity of our people through Torah which, on every level from alef-beit to razin d'razin (innermost secrets), is the unifying force, uniting the one people by means of the one Torah to the One G-d.

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20 Kislev, 5745 (1984)

I am in receipt of your letter, which came as somewhat of a surprise to me since it is well known that the various Chabad institutions are completely financially independent of our central office. This is also an obvious necessity, in view of the fact that there are hundreds of such institutions the world over, and it would be impossible to direct them all from headquarters.

In light of the above, you will surely understand that I cannot do anything in the said situation.

I must make special reference to your remark about your personal feeling that there is "no further use for me," etc.

Needless to say, there is no room or justification for such a feeling, G-d forbid, for this would be counter to one of the basics of Judaism in general, and of Chabad in particular, which declares that every Jew is like a complete world, as the founder of Chabad emphasizes in chapter 32 (the numerical equivalent of which is "lev" — "heart") of Tanya.

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11 Kislev, 5735 (1974)

Your letter of the 12th of Cheshvan reached me with some delay. In reply to your question:

It is written, "Increasing knowledge increases pain." One of the explanations of this is as follows: A fool may be altogether unaware that he lacks anything, and may therefore be satisfied with himself, or, as the saying goes, he may live in a Fools' Paradise. But the person who strives to increase his or her knowledge of Judaism and increasingly appreciates the great good and preciousness of Torah and mitzvot finds that, with the increase of this knowledge, comes an increased longing and thirst for more and more; hence the impatience and dissatisfaction with oneself, etc.

These are the natural "growing pains" of spiritual advancement...

# A WORD from the Director

*On the 24th day of Tevet, 5573, Rabbi Schneur Zalman ben Baruch of Liadi, the founder of Chabad-Lubavitch Chasidism, passed away in the village of Piena.*

*Rabbi Schneur Zalman, known also as "The Alter (Elder) Rebbe" was renowned not only for expounding on the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and the Magid of Mezritch, but also for his brilliance in Talmudic studies and Jewish law.*

*This dual-faceted genius is alluded to in the Alter Rebbe's first name, "Schneur." For Schneur is a combination of two words — "shnei" meaning "two," and "ohr" meaning "light." We see this in his two most well known books, the Tanya, the basic book of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, and the Rav's Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law.*

*Concerning Rabbi Schneur Zalman's passing, his son and successor, Rabbi Dov Ber, wrote: "Until the day of his rest, 'his mouth did not cease from the study of Torah.' With a clear and tranquil mind, and cleaving wondrously to his Maker, he prayed the evening service; he recited Havdala...and then after Shabbat he was united in a perfect bond with the Holy One, Blessed Be He."*

*In one of his discourses, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber, the fifth Chabad Rebbe, discusses a Chasid's conduct on the anniversary of the passing of one of the Rebbes: "It is certain that on the day of their yahrtzeit, the Rebbes of past generations arouse Divine compassion for all Chasidim, as well as for their wives and children. However, this is only an arousal of a general nature; those Chasidim who, on that day, set aside a time for study and for a Chasidic farbrengen, may be considered to have handed a pidyon nefesh [a note requesting blessings] to the Rebbe whose yahrtzeit is then being observed."*

J. I. Gutnick

## Wrapping the straps of the tefillin

In regard to wrapping the straps of the head tefillin around its box there is no one way in which it must be done; technically speaking you can wrap it around the box any way you want.

Some people have a custom to put the knot up against the back wall, fold the loop under the box to each side, and than wrap the two straps around each side of the box respectively, forming makeshift dove's wings (you might think of it as the tracks on an army tank).

This custom is to remember a story in the Talmud where a Jew by the name of Elisha risked his life to wear his Tefillin despite the

Roman decree prohibiting their use. One day a Roman soldier spotted Elisha with his Tefillin on and took chase. When he finally caught up to Elisha the latter had put the Head Tefillin in his hand. The soldier asked Elisha what was in his hand. Elisha responded "dove's wings". The soldier ordered Elisha to open his hand, and miraculously his Tefillin had turned into dove's wings.

# CUSTOMS CORNER

# It Happened Once...



In his youth, the famed Maggid of Zlotchov, Rabbi Yechiel Michel, would sit all day in the *Beit Midrash* (study hall and synagogue) and pursue his studies.

In that town there lived a simple Jew who earned his livelihood by transporting travellers and merchandise in his wagon. One day, the wagon driver came to the local Rabbi in a state of great distress. "Help me, Rebbe!" he wept. "I have committed a terrible sin. I have desecrated the holy Shabbat. How can I atone for my transgression?"

"How did this come to pass?" asked the Rabbi.

"Last Friday," the man explained, "I was returning from the marketplace with a wagonload of merchandise when I lost my way in the forest. By the time I found my way to the outskirts of the city, the sun had already set. So preoccupied was I with my worry over the merchandise that I failed to realize that the Shabbat had arrived until it was too late..."

Seeing how broken-hearted the man was, the rabbi comforted him and said: "My son, the gates of repentance are never closed. Donate a pound of candles to the synagogue and your transgression will be forgiven."

The young prodigy, Rabbi Michel, overheard this exchange, and was displeased by the rabbi's approach. "A pound of candles to atone for violating the Shabbat?" he thought to himself. "The Shabbat is one of the most important mitzvot of the Torah. Why is the rabbi treating the matter so lightly?"

That Friday afternoon, the wagon driver brought the candles to the synagogue. As Rabbi Michel watched disapprovingly from his table against the back wall, he placed them on the lectern for the synagogue beadle to light in honour of the Shabbat. But this was not to be. Before the beadle arrived, a stray dog carried off the candles and ate them.

The distraught penitent ran to report the incident to the rabbi. "Woe is me!" he wept. "My repentance has been rejected in Heaven! What shall I do?!"

"You're making too much of the matter," the rabbi reassured him. "These things happen — there's no reason to deduce that G-d is rejecting your repentance. Bring another pound of candles to the synagogue next week, and everything will be alright."

But when the beadle lit the candles on the following Friday afternoon, they inexplicably melted down, so that by the time Shabbat commenced, nothing was left of them. And upon his third attempt on the week after that, a strong wind suddenly blew out the candles just when Shabbat began and it was not possible to relight them.

The Rabbi, too, realized, that something was amiss, and advised the wagon driver to seek the counsel of the great Chassidic master, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov.

"Hmm..." said the Baal Shem Tov, upon hearing the man's story. "It seems that a certain young scholar in your town finds fault with the path to repentance that the Rabbi has prescribed for you. Never mind. Next week, donate another pound of candles to the synagogue. This time, I promise you that everything will be alright. And tell Rabbi Michel that I would be honoured if he could trouble himself to come visit me."

Rabbi Michel wasted no time in abiding by the Baal Shem Tov's request. But no sooner had he and his coachman set out than all sorts of troubles beset their journey. First, the wagon tumbled into a ditch. Then an axle broke many miles from the nearest town. After which they lost their way altogether.

When they finally found the road to Mezhibuzh it was late Friday afternoon and the sun was about to set. They were forced to abandon the wagon and continue on foot.

Rabbi Michel arrived at the Baal Shem Tov's door an hour into Shabbat, weary and traumatized by his near-violation of the holy day. "Good Shabbat, Reb Michel," Rabbi Israel greeted him, "come in and warm yourself by the fire. You, Reb Michel, have never tasted sin, so you did not comprehend the remorse a Jew feels at having transgressed the will of his Father in Heaven. I trust that you now understand something of the agony that our friend experienced. Believe me, his remorse alone more than atoned for his unwitting transgression..."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

**These are the names of the Children of Israel coming into Egypt (Ex. 1:1)**

The verse says "coming," in the present tense, rather than "who came," in the past tense. For the duration of the 210-year exile in Egypt, the Jews felt as if they had just arrived in that land. They never adopted Egyptian ways and always considered their sojourn temporary. (*Ohel Yehoshua*)

**And she saw the child, and behold it was a weeping boy (Ex. 2:6)**

We can learn (and emulate) three things from a child: He is always happy, he is always occupied and never sits idle, and when he wants something, he cries. (*Reb Zussia of Annipoli*)

**And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro (Ex. 3:1)**

A young goat once ran away from the rest of the flock Moses was tending in the desert. Moses followed the animal into a thicket that hid a pool of fresh water. Seeing the goat drinking he exclaimed, "I didn't realize that you were thirsty. You must be so tired now." After the animal had quenched its thirst, Moses tenderly picked it up and carried it back to the rest of the flock. When G-d saw Moses' act of kindness towards his father-in-law's goat, He decreed that Moses was equally worthy of tending G-d's own flock—the Jewish People. (*Midrash Rabba*)

**For I am heavy of speech, and heavy of tongue (Ex. 4:10)**

The fact that Moses had difficulty speaking shows that his leadership was accepted solely because he carried G-d's message, and not because he was a skilful orator and master of rhetoric. (*Drashot Rabbenu Nissim*)

### CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

#### PARSHAS SHEMOT

23 TEVET • 9 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:28 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS :	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	TEHILIM:	8:30 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	<i>Molad</i> Friday January 15, 2010 Tevet 29, 5770	
		1:43:36 (11 <i>chalakim</i> ) PM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:32 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN- FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	MAARIV:	9:25 PM

#### CANDLE LIGHTING: 8 JANUARY 2010



Begins		Ends
8:28	MELBOURNE	9:32
8:15	ADELAIDE	9:17
6:30	BRISBANE	7:27
7:00	DARWIN	7:52
6:29	GOLD COAST	7:26
7:09	PERTH	8:09
7:52	SYDNEY	8:53
8:04	CANBERRA	9:06
8:31	LAUNCESTON	9:42
8:26	AUCKLAND	9:29
8:39	WELLINGTON	9:47

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

### The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקלה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.